

Prehistoric Cultural Relations between Western Japan and Southeastern Korea

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MY ASIAN fieldwork and research has been in and on Korea, and has been concerned primarily with trying to establish evidence for chronological development and change within the Korean so-called Neolithic. This work, of course, has not been done as an end in itself but preparatory to cultural reconstructions and with an ultimate goal of elucidating cultural ramifications in Korea's "Neolithic," relationships with North China, Southeast Asia, and western Japan, and processes whereby domesticated plants and animals became accepted and integrated into the cultural systems. Actually this goal awaits, and probably will for some time, amplification of basic data from Korea and the surrounding areas.

For a long time the focus of attention for Korea's cultural relationships during what was termed "Neolithic"—a period defined by the use of pottery variously termed Decorated Pottery or Combpattern pottery; *Kushememon-doki* in Japanese, *Chulmun t'ogi* in Korean—was on Siberia and northeastern Europe. In this geographic area there was an emphasis on physical manipulation of the surfaces of pottery to produce designs of depressed lines or dots. The distribution of such styles of surface manipulation was delimited very early by the noted prehistorian Fujita, who also pointed out their continuous distribution from East Asia across northern North America—the whole of which he suggested might aptly be termed the Northern Culture.

The historical relationships of various potteries of Fujita's Northern Culture have been queried, and the assumption that this pottery and its associated culture were introduced to Korea by peoples migrating from Siberia, possibly ultimately stemming from a North European center of the culture, appears less and less likely.

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Still the postulate of a Northern Culture continues to intrigue us and deserves to be explained. I hope to provide a partial explanation below in discussing Korean-Japanese cultural relations.

Working on materials from a site in southeastern Korea, I have been able to show a sequence of phases with varying pottery traditions preceding that of classic Combpattern. A brief synopsis of the ceramic sequence involved is in order to better understand these discussions (a full description may be found in Sample 1974).

The site at Tongsamdong is situated on a large island (Yongdo) which forms the western side of Pusan Harbor. Sometime before 4000 B.C., the site was settled by a people making a fairly sophisticated pottery of buff to orangish color, often decorated with fairly sparse areas of appliqué (raised decoration), in a few cases combined with incision or, rarely, a line of punctates. From the sherds, overall shape is not very evident, but all bases found were flat, "footed," and undecorated; rims were usually even (as contrasted to tapering or expanding), direct (as contrasted to inverted or everted), with flattened lips. Accompanying this ware was a thin-walled gray pottery with very coarse paste-and-finger impressions remaining from crimping of the coils used in manufacture, or, more rarely, with the surface smoothed over.

By about 4000 B.C. (3940 ± 140 —this and dates that follow are in C^{14} years), a deep deposit of what I call the Mokto phase covered the earlier Chodo. The decorated pottery and the orangish paste essentially disappear. The crude gray ware is predominant, some with surfaces completely smoothed over, but mainly with pinchings showing to various extents. Only a very few sherds show a crude scratched design or more decorative but crudely applied thin ridges (less than 50 sherds out of more than 1700). Shapes are medium deep bowls with rounded to somewhat pointed bases and shallow round-based bowls, with direct rims and rounded or pointed lips, in many cases nicked; a few necked pots occur. Bone gorges and compound barbed hooks of bone and stone indicate the means of taking the large number of shark, seabream, tuna, and cod represented by bone in the refuse. There is also abundant refuse of sea mammals, especially sea lion but also whale and dolphin. Obviously these were competent fisherfolk with considerable orientation to the sea.

The succeeding period, Pusan, dated to about 3000 B.C. (2995 ± 125), continues the gray utilitarian ware of the Mokto phase, but a better-made plain buff ware with flat bases begins to supplant it. The same buff paste is used for small, round-based delicate bowls with even, often slightly everted, rims terminating in pointed lips. These are neatly and variously decorated in a band near the mouth with appliqué, stamping, and incision or combinations of these in styles formerly considered a minor southeastern variant of the classic Combpattern, or by some a late variant of it owing to its more elegant design and shape. At Tongsamdong, it is shown to have definite chronological significance and stratigraphically precedes the major design form termed Combpattern. Systems of sea and land use appear to continue much the same as in the preceding Mokto phase.

This is succeeded by a stratum in which the dominant ware is the classic Combpattern, well known to most from a number of publications, especially the excellent monograph of Arimitsu (1962). Vessels are large subconical ones. Design tends to be in bands with several rows of stamped short lines at the rim and boldly incised,

often herringbone, design below, usually continuing over the pointed base. This phase I have termed Tudo. Although fishing continues to be important, it appears that sea mammals are of much less significance than formerly, and land-mammal hunting increases.

The two phases succeeding this one witness the introduction and eventual dominance in the ceramics of certain plain wares very similar to those which in other areas have now come to be considered contemporary with the Korean megalithic culture. Small amounts of bronze are also introduced. At Tongsamdong this is called the Yongdo phase.

In consideration of the relationship of the Korean "Combpattern" to Siberian and North American wares, it seems without doubt that Fujita delineated an important cultural sphere in which certain basic pottery technologies are widespread but that we cannot reach conclusions about direct diffusion of specific pottery types or broader cultural patterns. There is no need to call upon extensive diffusion or migration to explain the appearance of classic "Combpattern" in Korea, as has so often been done. As shown at Tongsamdong, this Tudo pottery has strong continuities with the preceding phase; certain design patterns of Pusan, while distinct from those of Tudo, could well provide prototypes, especially for the neck band of stamped design (Mohr, Chard, and Sample 1966). A minor portion of Mokto gray pinched sherds which continue into Pusan and Tudo times show more regular pinchings, sometimes tooled instead of finger impressed, that are confined to the upper body in a manner again resembling the Tudo rim impressions. These conclusions have some relevance in considering materials in Japan which have been considered closely related to Korea's "Combpattern" tradition.

In viewing relations between Korea and Japan in the Neolithic and later times, there has been, until recently at least, a strong inclination to see Korea as the bridge whereby continental culture reached Japan. We have continually looked to the continent for the genesis of traits as they appeared in the Japanese sequence. Owing to the evidence for early pottery in Japan, many have been forced to concede that we must at least keep our minds open to considerations of influence proceeding in the reverse fashion. Prehistorians in general are inclined to continue to concentrate on tracing lines of diffusion. When a trait is discovered in the prehistoric past, the usual query is "Where did it come from?" We then look for an origin elsewhere, sometimes assuming this to be an area in which the trait had been previously discovered, or rely on geographic arguments to trace logical routes of diffusion.

A case in point would be the proposed relationship between Korea's classic Combpattern (my Tudo Bold) and the Early Jōmon Sobata pottery of Kyushu. A typical statement: "The Comb Pattern pottery people in the Korean coastal region must have moved into Kyushu and the adjoining islands and introduced the Sobata pottery" (Kim 1962: 45). We now have even more tempting bait for postulating direct importation of Korean fashions to Kyushu. Mohr and Yoshizaki (1974) have been able to show stratigraphic evidence for the division of what has been called Sobata into an earlier and a later phase: the earlier is called Nishikaratsu (after a site with a nearly pure deposit), while for the later the term Sobata is retained. Parallel to the Pusan-Tudo developments across the strait, Nishikaratsu has finer, more lightly incised and stamped design often restricted to the upper body, contrasting with the much bolder and more extensively decorated Sobata

pottery style which succeeds it. Other evidence, however, makes the argument for direct diffusion or migration from Korea to Japan appear an unlikely answer.

The distinctions in the potteries of the two areas merit attention. Tundo pots tend to be larger and thicker than Sobata and are most usually of subconical shape. Rim forms are overwhelmingly straight, even or expanding, with flat rims. Sobata appears to have much more variation in size and form. There also appears to be much more standardization of design in Tundo, especially the placing of decoration in bands—rim versus body and occasionally base. Also, Sobata pots commonly have decoration on the inside near the rim, a characteristic lacking, so far as I know, in Korean Tundo (Combpattern) ceramics.

Cross dating of trade wares (Japanese pottery) in the Korean sequence and C¹⁴ dates from Japan and Korea both indicate that the Japanese potteries are considerably older than the Korean ones that they resemble. Two sherds from Tongsamdong selected as probable trade pieces and shown to prominent Japanese scholars were unanimously regarded as Sobata; they came from the very earliest Mokto or possibly from a late Chodo stratum; a possible Sobata sherd occurred in the Pusan deposit. The other Japanese trade sherds were thought to be Late Middle or Early Late Jōmon and came from the latest, Yongdo, stratum. Thus the Japanese wares thought to closely resemble the Korean Tundo or "Combpattern" occur as trade pieces in strata 1000 or more years earlier and in association with quite dissimilar styles of pottery. Absolute dating for Sobata—3240 B.C. for shell associated with Sobata pottery at the Sobata site—supports this. I have not yet been successful in identifying Korean trade wares in Japanese sites.

As with the Siberian-European connections, I would like to suggest that in southern Korea and western Japan we are dealing with an area in which basic ideas of technology and style may lead to very similar productions at different periods without the necessity of direct importation or influence in either direction. Although there is, thus, evidence of culture contact through trade sherds and other trade goods at Tongsamdong and indirect evidence in both areas that seaworthy craft existed to make the trading trip, the potteries that we are discussing in each case have logical local antecedents, appear to be quite removed temporally, and may be separate developments within distinct cultural traditions.

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